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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001649

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: VP RUBERWA MUSES ON ELECTIONS, CONGO'S FUTURE

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

1. (C) During an October 2 dinner, VP Ruberwa shared his insights on his evaluation of his own character and electoral chances/options, as well as his opinion of the other two likely presidential candidates, VP Jean-Pierre Bemba and President Joseph Kabila.

A Tutsi Triumphant

2. (C) Ruberwa began by noting that he personally, and the Banyamulenge (Congolese Tutsi) community in general, had come a long way in the two years of the transition. He recalled his genuine fear for his safety in the first months following his arrival in Kinshasa at the start of the transition, and noted wryly that, if there had been a popularity poll conducted at the time (as are currently being done now), his rating would have been about minus two hundred. But in the ensuing two years he felt that he had triumphed, to a large extent and with some notable exceptions, over prejudice and hatred. Referring to current polling (in which he scores about plus four percent approval rating), he said that he believes his actual popularity to be much higher, noting (correctly) that among the four vice presidents he is widely considered the most moral and the most hardworking. He mentioned (modesty and pride struggling for dominance on his face) his "fan club" in Kinshasa, composed he said of all elements of society and politics -- church and civil society leaders and people who officially belong to other parties but still admire his efforts to introduce change. Ruberwa briefly played a video of himself addressing one of the club meetings, a packed gathering in a large assembly hall, and certainly on the video the audience seemed animated and interested (although of course such gatherings frequently are stage settings to convey exactly that impression).

3. (C) Recalling the low moments for the Banyamulenge community (particularly in South Kivu) in the same two-year period (the taking of Bukavu by Nkunda and Mutebusi -- Tutsis both -- and the subsequent Gatumba massacre, which Ruberwa remains convinced was orchestrated by elements within President Kabila's PPRD group), Ruberwa said that "his people and the Congolese society" have come a long way back toward tolerance and acceptance, after a long period of succumbing to political manipulation. Referring specifically to the quiet but constant return of Banyamulenge refugees who had fled to Rwanda in the wake of the Bukavu attack, Ruberwa conceded that even eight months ago it would not have been possible for them to return safely. While admitting that flashpoints remain which could still cause problems before elections (he cited in particular manipulations by PPRD Secretary General Vital Kamerhe and the return to the High

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Plateau of a group of Mutebusi's soldiers), he is optimistic not only that elections will take place but also that the RCD can do well.

A Tutsi Conflicted

4. (C) Despite the above optimism, Ruberwa is too smart to believe that he could be elected president -- at least "not yet, but maybe in the next election in five years." In a remarkably objective fashion he said that, despite his strengths (in order: religious, moral, intelligent, logical, hardworking) and despite having won over many doubters, he is and always will be a Tutsi and, at the moment, he has Nkunda and Mutebusi hanging around his neck like albatrosses. Clearly baffled as to how to manage this issue, Ruberwa once again shook his head when PolCouns suggested that he needed to put some political space between himself and the two rebellious military leaders, saying quietly that he would lose his tenuous control over the RCD military if he attempted to do so, although he did seem to take under consideration the possibility of announcing that he supports an open, complete and fair investigation of the Bukavu affair and would support any findings by an authorized civilian court.

5. (C) Ruberwa also indicated that, if he can find an acceptable way to do so, he will name someone else as the RCD's presidential candidate. He said, however, that the candidate would still have to be a Banyamulenge (in order not to betray the community which admires his leadership), and at

the same time sufficiently high-profile to reassure all RCD members that he, Ruberwa, is making the decision with the party's best interests in mind. He didn't drop any names, but instead went on (in musing mode) to note that other important positions will be available after the elections, including (in order): head of the National Assembly (a person who would have to have the courage to say "no" to both the president and prime minister in the future government when necessary, a moral watchdog of the public interest -- unlike, he said, Olivier Kamitatu, current head of the Assembly); head of the Supreme Court (sharing many of the qualities listed above, plus of course extensive knowledge of the law); or the posts of Ministers of Interior or Justice. (Comment: Interestingly, he did not mention the post of prime minister. Current talk in Kinshasa is that the thinking on future prime ministers is that a candidate from the western provinces would be preferred if the elected president is from the east. End Comment.)

Looking Toward Elections

16. (C) Turning his analytical eye toward President Kabila and VP Bemba (widely recognized as probable contenders in the presidential elections), Ruberwa said that Kabila's biggest weakness (as agreed by all) is his extremely private, even shy, nature. Kabila does not like to appear in public, nor even to give televised speeches or radio talks. Ruberwa raised another issue, however, which PolCouns had not previously heard, i.e., that Congolese intellectuals look down on Kabila as uneducated, and many will not vote for him for that reason. (Note: Unlike most Congolese in significant political positions, Kabila does not have a university degree. End Note.) Ruberwa said that many of these intellectuals attribute Kabila's unwillingness to appear in the public eye to his lack of education, saying that he does not speak or read well and attempts to hide this from the public. Kabila's strength, of course, is that he is the sitting president, but in Ruberwa's view he is doing a surprisingly poor job of capitalizing on this advantage.

17. (C) Ruberwa said that in his view, and given his plummeting popularity even in his own province and within his own party, Bemba might be a candidate for the presidency but his chances of winning office, even with significant amounts of pre-election spending, seem to be declining. PolCouns noted that Bemba's party, the MLC, might not even exist by the time elections arrive, should competing elements such as Jose Endundu actually formally announce a new party, which would attract many current MLC members (and some from the RCD and PPRD as well). Ruberwa agreed, but said that, despite his debilitating weakness (incredible arrogance), Bemba does have intelligence and "lots of money" on his side, and so can't be ruled out.

18. (C) Finally, in terms of strengthening the RCD and its electoral chances, Ruberwa said that the party is working actively to attract voters in both Kasai provinces who normally would throw their support behind UDPS candidates but, lacking a candidate, will be looking for alternatives. (Note: RCD has two strong candidates in the Kasais, Defense Minister Adolphe Onusumba and Vice Minister of Budget Tresor Kapuku, who could conceivably be the magnets for this effort. End Note.) If they succeed in "capturing" the UDPS elements, Ruberwa said, the RCD's own alliance negotiations might suddenly advance. (Comment: The RCD and PPRD have been engaged in a complicated dance for the last couple of months, trying to decide if reactivating old ties would be more advantageous than not. If the RCD could also effectively bring a large UDPS segment in with them, it could indeed tip the balance in favor of a so-called grand alliance. End Comment.)

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